

Message Text

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THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE SENT TO SECSTATE WASHDC DTG R 140855Z FEB 76

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SUBJECT: FEBURARY 16 TROPICAL PRODUCTS MEETING

1. GATT SECRETARIAT CALLED INFORMAL MEETING OF SEVEN DC'S AND SEVEN LDC'S TO DISCUSS WHAT PROGRESS MIGHT BE MADE IN THE TROPICAL PRODUCTS (TP) MEETING BEGINNING FEBURARY 16. GATT DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL MATHUR CHAIRED THE MEETING WHICH FOCUSED ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: WHEN AND IN WHAT FORM OFFERS WERE TO BE TABLED. IF AND TO WHOM OFFERS WILL BE CIRCULATED, AND WHAT NEXT STEPS WERE ENVISAGED AFTER THE TABLING OF OFFERS. HE ENCOURAGED AN EXCHANGE OF THE INITIAL VIEWS OF DELEGATIONS ON THESE ISSUES.

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2. US (WALKER), EC, JAPAN, AND CANADA INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD TABLE

OFFERS ON MARCH 1, SWITZERLAND INDICATED THAT THEY PROBABLY COULD NOT TABLE THEIR OFFERS UNTIL MARCH 15, AND THE AUSTRALIAN AND NORDIC DELEGATIONS INDICATED THAT PROCEDURES WERE UNDERWAY IN THEIR CAPITALS WITH THE INTENTION OF TABLING OFFERS ON MARCH 1.

3. WITH RESPECT TO FORMAT FOR OFFERS, LDC'S AT THE MEETING (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ARGENTINA) INDICATED THAT THEY HAD NO STRONG VIEWS. ARGENTINA INDICATED THAT IT WOULD REQUEST THE GATT SECRETARIAT TO CIRCULATE ITS PROPOSED FORMAT WHICH INCLUDED A DURENT DESCRIPTIION OF TARIFF AND NONTARIFF REGIMES ON REQUESTED ITEMS AND THE OFFER A COUNTRY WAS MAKING. WITH RESPECT TO TARIFFS, THE DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT REGIME WOULD INCLUDE MFN, GSP, AND SPECIAL PREFERENTIAL RATES. DC'S WHICH SPOKE TO THIS QUESTION INDICATED THEIR INTENTION TO IDENTIFY THE ITEM, THE CURRENT RATE OF DUTY, AND THE OFFER, NOTING THAT NONTARIFF MEASURES WERE NOT SUSCEPTIBLE TO TABULAR FORM.

4. WITH RESPECT TO CIRCULATION, LDC'S (INDIA, JAMAICA, BRASIL, AND ARGENTINA) ARGUED FOR CIRCULATION OF COMPREHENSIVE OFFERS LISTS TO ALL PARTICIPANTS. THE US SUPPORTED BY AUSTRALIA AND JAPAN, INDICATED THAT IT PREFERRED BILATERAL CIRCULATION OF OFFERS ON THE BASIS OF TRADE INTEREST. IN THIS MANNER, DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WOULD BE INFORMED ON ALL PRODUCTS OF TRADE INTEREST TO THEM WHETHER OR NOT THEY HAD MADE A REQUEST. THE EC MADE NO SPECIFIC SUGGESTION BUT PROPOSED THAT IT WAS SUFFICIENT THAT OFFERING COUNTRIES CIRCULATE THEIR OFFERS IN THE MANNER MOST ACCEPTABLE TO THEM.

5. SINGAPORE NOTED THAT THE IMPORTANT THING WAS THAT OFFERS BE TABLED ON MARCH 1 AND THAT THE QUESTION OF CIRCULATION COULD BE DECIDED AT A LATER DATE. INDIA, WHILE NOTING IT DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CIRCULATION OF OFFERS TO ALL PARTICIPANTS, AGREED. THE NORDICS THEN PROPOSED A COMPROMISE SOLUTION--THEY ENVISAGED A TWO-STAGE APPROACH. IN THE FIRST STAGE OFFERING COUNTRIES WOULD INDICATE TO ANY COUNTRY WHICH HAD A TRADE INTEREST THOSE PRODUCTS ON WHICH IT WAS MAKING AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OFFER. IN A SECOND STAGE THE OFFERS WOULD BE CIRCULATED TO ALL PARTICIPANTS. THE TIMING OF THE SECOND STAGE AND THE METHOD OF CIRCULATION COULD BE DECIDED IN A LATER MEETING. UNFORTUNATELY, THE NORDICS FLABORATED THEIR VIEW THAT THIS CIRCULATION TO PARTICIPANTS WOULD BE A CONSOLIDATION OF ALL DEVELOPED COUNTRY OFFERS. THE CHAIRMAN SUMMED UP BY INDICATING THAT THERE WAS NON CONSENSUS ON ANY OF THESE PROPOSALS FOR THE CIRCULATION OF OFFERS.

HE DID NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT APPARENTLY THERE WAS SOME CONSENSUS THAT THE CIRCULATION OF COMPREHENSIVE OFFER LISTS TO ALL PARTICIPANTS WOULD BE DONE LATER THAN MARCH 1.

6. WITH RESPECT TO THE WORK OF THE GROUP SUBSEQUENT TO TABLING OFFERS, USDEL INDICATED THAT BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WERE NECESSARY, AT WHICH TIME IT WOULD ELUCIDATE THIS OFFER AND THE "OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE NEGOTIATION" (READ LDC CONTRIBUTIONS). THE EC AND OTHER DC'S SUPPORTED THIS VIEW, NOTING THAT THEY WISHED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN THEIR OFFERS. THE INDIAN DELEGATE NOTED THAT HE BELEIVED PLURILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WERE ALSO NECESSARY.

6. MATHUR CONTINUED TO PRESS MORE EXPLICITLY FOR DELEGATIONS' VIEWS ON ANOTHER MEETING OF THE GROUP. JAMAICA INDICATED THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO WORK TOWARDS A DEADLINE AND PROPOSED, WITH THE SUPPORT OF INDIA, THAT THE GROUP MEET THIS SUMMER SOMETIME BEFORE THE TNC. THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT ON THIS PROPOSAL BUT ARGENTINA NOTED THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE CHAIR CALLING AN EARLIER MEETING MIGHT BE IMPORTANT IF THE WORK IN BILATERAL AND PLURILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WAS NOT PROCEEDING ON A TIMELY BASIS.

8. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT LD S DID NOT PRESS FOR AN EARLY TPG MEETING, OR EVEN A MEETING BEFORE UNCTAD IV. THEY SEEMED CONTENT WITH THE BILATERAL POSTURE. THIS IS A DESIRABLE DEVELOPMENT FROM OUR VIEWPOINT. WALKER UNQUOTE
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